

U.S. Capitol

1st Street, Between Independence and Constitution Avenues

Southwest Washington, D.C.

Metro Stop: Capitol South (House Side) and Union Station (Senate Side)



The [United States Capitol](#) is the most recognized symbol of democratic government in the world and the focal point of the government's legislative branch. It has housed the meeting chambers of the House of Representatives and the Senate for two centuries.

President George Washington laid the cornerstone on September 18, 1793 and the north wing was first occupied by the Congress in 1880. In 1807 the south wing was occupied.

On August 24, 1814, British troops set fire to the building during the War of 1812, but a

rainstorm prevented its complete destruction. Reconstruction of the wings was completed in 1819. The addition of the center section, topped by a low dome, signaled the completion of the original building in 1826.

The 19th Century brought the additions of larger wings and the cast-iron dome. Construction was suspended in 1861 so that the Capitol could be used as a military barracks, hospital, and bakery for the Civil War. In 1862, however, construction resumed because President Abraham Lincoln believed "the Capitol must go on, just as the Union must go on."



In addition to its use by Congress, the Capitol is a museum of [American art](#) and history.

Of Special Interest to Wisconsinites

In 1864 each state was invited to contribute two statues of prominent citizens in the state's history for display in the Capitol. Wisconsin's statues are that of Jacques Marquette, given in 1896 and located on the second floor in the House connecting corridor, and [Robert M. LaFollette](#), given in 1929 and located in Statuary Hall.

Times of Operation

The Capitol is open to the public for guided tours only. The Capitol is open for tours Monday through Saturday, except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Occasionally, a special event, such as a visit by a head of state, may temporarily suspend guided tours. For recorded information on any possible special events, you may call the Guide Service's recorded information line at (202) 225-6827.

Free guided public tours are given Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with the last tour conducted at 3:30 p.m. Tours last approximately one hour. All public tours of the Capitol are accessible. Visitors must obtain free tickets for tours at the [Capitol Guide Service kiosk](#), located along the curving sidewalk southwest of the Capitol (near the intersection of First Street, S.W., and Independence Avenue). Ticket distribution begins at 9:00 a.m. daily on a first-come, first-served basis. Tickets are distributed one per person and are for the same day admission only. Ticket holders will be directed to the [South Visitor Receiving Facility](#), located south of the Capitol, to begin their tour. Maximum tour size is 40 people.

Before entry into the Capitol, all visitors are screened by a magnetometer, and all items that visitors may bring inside the building are screened by an x-ray device. Please review the list of [prohibited items](#) visitors are not allowed to bring into the Capitol and/or Galleries. The Capitol Police are authorized to make exceptions if a prohibited item is determined to be necessary and required to serve child care, medical, or other special needs.

The Congressional Special Services Office (CSSO) provides information about [tours for the disabled](#). The CSSO telephone number is (202) 224-4048 (voice) or (202) 224-4049 (TTY).

Construction is in progress of a [Capitol Visitor Center](#). Because visitation guidelines will be changing as the construction process goes along, you are encouraged to call the Capitol Guide Service recorded information line for the latest tour information before your visit. That number is (202) 225-6827.

Visiting the Galleries

The galleries of the Senate and House of Representatives are open to view whenever either body is in session. The galleries are also open Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. when the Senate and House are not in session. Gallery passes are required to enter the gallery and can be obtained from your Congressional Representatives. My [office](#) has gallery passes available for both the House and Senate Chambers.

[Congressional Reserved Tours Information](#)

U.S. Capitol Links

- [U.S. Capitol Website](#)
- [U.S. Capitol Guide Service Information](#)
- [Accessibility Information](#)
- [Architectural Features and Historic Places](#)
- [Virtual Tour of the U.S. Capitol](#)
- [Works of Art in the Capitol Complex](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions about the Capitol](#)

Places of Interest Nearby

- [U.S. Botanic Garden](#)
- [Library of Congress](#)
- [U.S. Supreme Court](#)

[Return to Tours and Tickets](#)